

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD REGULAR MEETING  
Minutes of August 10, 2021**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Nathaniel Miller, Charles Morse, and John Stevens (absent). Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Peter J. DeMasi (Fire Chief), Gordon Bock, and Elroy Hill.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** There were no changes to the posted agenda.

- IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None.

**V. DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT**

- a. Peter J. DeMasi, Fire Chief.** Manager Schulz noted that Chief DeMasi hasn't provided an in-person update to the Select Board members in some time. Chief DeMasi said the Northfield Fire Department (NPD) has been kept busy in recent months with numerous structure fires and other calls for service. This occurred both in Northfield and in neighboring communities through the Mutual Aid program. The new fire tanker truck arrived in early July and already has been put into service during a structure fire. The truck also has been employed for training the local firefighters and has proved to be a very effective piece of machinery. As for NFD membership, Chief DeMasi said there are about twenty (20) individuals on the roster with about a dozen of them active members. These numbers have been steady for some time and due to the number of active members working in or around Northfield, daytime calls usually can be handled without contacting Mutual Aid. By contrast, volunteer fire departments in other Vermont communities have found this much more problematic. Chair Maxwell said the Northfield community is very fortunate in this regard.

Manager Schulz asked about the dispatching situation. Chief DeMasi said the dispatching system is now being upgraded so that messages can be sent to all regional radio towers simultaneously. The current system has the dispatcher only using the single tower closest to the responding agency. This upgrade will help considerably with quicker emergency responses. Chief DeMasi said the current system is so antiquated that this upgrade has been long overdue. Manager Schulz asked if there will be more increases in dispatching charges in the future. Chief DeMasi said the upgrade cost is about \$5,000 and this will be shared by member departments over a ten (10) year period, which will not result in a significant spike in dispatch expenses. He doesn't anticipate any other significant increases in the near future. Manager Schulz asked about the condition of the Northfield Fire Station. Chief DeMasi said the building is in good condition due to recent work on the roof. Board members Morse, Miller, and Goodrich did not have any questions for Chief DeMasi but complemented him and the NFD members for their good work. Chair Maxwell asked if there were any plans to perform any aerial ladder truck training on the Norwich University (NU) campus in the near future. Such training is a condition for the annual gift NU provides the municipality. Chief DeMasi said such training has not been done recently as the campus was closed to visitors for about a year due to the pandemic. Now that the campus has reopened, he will get in touch with NU officials in order to schedule this in the near future. He added that the NFD members all have been vaccinated for COVID-19.

Asked about the status of the aerial ladder truck, Chief DeMasi said it is scheduled for inspection and recertification at the of this month. The vehicle has been operating very well but he noted minor problems were found during last year's inspection. Chair Maxwell asked how the fire hoses were tested. Chief DeMasi said it has been past practice to test them in house during training sessions. He has been looking into bringing in an outside company to perform this all at one time rather than having the testing stretch out over the year. Chair Maxwell said the community is very fortunate to have such an efficient and well-run fire department. He thanked Chief DeMasi for his report and for all his good work throughout the year.

#### **VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **July 27, 2021 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Chair Maxwell abstaining.**

#### **VII. APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Approval of Warrant #03-22.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve Warrant #03-22 in the amount of \$1,943,774.41. It was noted that of the total warrant amount, \$1,700,000 represented borrowing for the Union Brook Road Reconstruction project. Chair Maxwell asked about a \$18,192 credit from the Vermont Public Power Supply Authority (VPPSA). Manager Schulz said the Northfield Electric Department (NED) purchases Transco stock through VPPSA and this amount is a dividend. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Approval of Biweekly Payroll through July 25, 2021.** Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to approve the biweekly payroll in the amount of \$91,709.77. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

#### **VIII. SELECT BOARD**

- a. **Capital Equipment Note (2021 Fire Tanker).** Manager Schulz said this bank note is for the new fire vehicle discussed earlier by Chief DeMasi. It was the decision of the Select Board to fund its purchase half with budgeted Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) monies and the other half through borrowing. This is the note for that loan and is a four-year note. There was consideration of using the Vermont Bond Bank for a longer term note but we were able to receive a lower interest rate through Union Bank. Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to approve the Capital Equipment Note in the amount of \$181,976 at 1.51% interest; to approve the Capital Equipment Borrowing Resolution; and to approve the Capital Equipment Note Tax Certificate. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.** Manager Schulz said no action is needed at this time as he merely wished to provide the Select Board members with an update on the federal funds being provided to Vermont municipalities to provide fiscal recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally, it was thought that the funds would be distributed on a per capita basis with each municipality receiving about \$100 per resident. That would have provided Northfield with about \$680,000. However, since county governments in Vermont don't have much function compared to those in other states, the amount previously designated to Vermont counties has been reallocated to municipalities instead. As a result, the amount Northfield will receive is now estimated at \$1,900,000. The municipality recently received about \$340,000, which is about half of the original allocation amount.

Manager Schulz said the Select Board members will have to determine in the near future how these funds should be spent. He suggested that this might be a continuing process as the federal government is still writing the rules regarding the types of local projects that are eligible for these funds. For example, it is very likely that a stormwater project would meet federal criteria. Manager Schulz has spoken to the department heads for their views on how these funds should be expended. Highway Foreman Trent Tucker has suggested purchasing a second road grader. Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) Chief Lawton Rutter proposed the purchase of emergency generators that could provide power for municipal facilities in case of long-lasting outages. Utility Superintendent Patrick DeMasi has suggested extending the municipal sewer lines along the Vermont Route 12 corridor. The next step is for the Select Board members to determine the best route for obtaining community feedback that might provide other proposals. Chair Maxwell asked about the timeline for using these funds. Manager Schulz said municipalities must indicate how these funds will be spent by December 31, 2024. There is an additional two (2) year period to actually expend all the funds. Manager Schulz said this is an interesting and exciting “problem” we now have in determining how to spend these outside funds. Board member Morse felt it was important for the Select Board members to have both community involvement and local business support for whatever decisions they decide to make. This should start with outreach to community members regarding the upcoming process. Manager Schulz will work to create an outreach strategy for future Select Board review. Chair Maxwell said it is important to inform residents that the federal government has rules regarding which projects are or are not eligible for these funds. He doesn’t want community members to become focused on one possible use that later proves to be ineligible. Chair Maxwell would like this information circulated within the community as soon as possible.

## **IX. TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT**

- a. Revised Ambulance Fees.** Manager Schulz included in the packet proposed revisions to the fees charged to NAS patients, clients, etc. for various services and materials. These charges haven’t been revised for some time so some of the changes are quite significant. This matter will be on the agenda for the next regular meeting (08/24/21) as NAS Chief Rutter will be in attendance then to answer any questions, etc.
- b. COVID-19 Testing.** Manager Schulz said the NAS continues to provide free testing at the Northfield Ambulance Bay and satellite locations in Montpelier and Williamstown. The amount of testing declined in recent months as more Vermonters received vaccinations but has seen a resurgence in recent weeks due to concerns about the more contagious Delta variant. The testing probably will continue for another six (6) months. The municipality is reimbursed by the state for this service and has made a net profit of about \$60,000 to date.
- c. Highway Department.** The highway crew have been busy recently with such summertime projects as gravel road resurfacing. About five (5) miles of backroad have been completed so far. The road material used is smaller than in past years and is further crushed down by a roller as soon as it is put down. Manager Schulz has received positive comments about the change. The crew also is assisting with the paving project on Slate Avenue and performing a general cleanup of the community in anticipation of the numerous visitors expected to take part in the upcoming Labor Day Weekend Festivities. Chair Maxwell would like the stormwater retention facility on Central Street cleaned out as recent storms have resulted in quite an accumulation of material.

- d. **South Main Street Sidewalk Project.** Manager Schulz noted that a lot of progress has been made over the past two (2) weeks. Providing the weather holds up, all the work should be concluded by the end of next week.

**X. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS**

- a. **Uncollected Dog Waste.** Due to his involvement with the Northfield Farmers Market held every Tuesday afternoon on the Common, Board member Morse gets much feedback about what is concerning Northfield residents. One constant complaint recently is about the amount of uncollected dog waste accumulating the tall grass areas of Dog River Park. Board member Morse hopes the dog owners responsible will be more considerate in future or the municipality might have to take corrective action. Board member Goodrich asked if collection bags were available at the park. Manager Schulz said there are dispensers there and he will check to ensure they are all well-stocked.
- b. **Proposed Northfield Dog Park.** At the previous meeting, the Select Board members authorized the establishment of a Dog Park on municipal property located on Water Street. Board member Goodrich noted a resident of the neighboring apartment building has put a trampoline on the site and she asked if it would have to be relocated. Manager Schulz said even though the actual design and footprint of the park is still undetermined, it is likely that the trampoline and other items put down at this location will have to be moved. He has been in contact with their owners about this.
- c. **Main Street Bridge.** Board member Goodrich recently noticed a broken bracket on the bridge and asked if this was being addressed. Manager Schulz said a truck caused this damage some time ago and our insurance carrier has provided \$12,000 for repairs. After receiving a few quotes, a contractor was hired who should be here soon. Mr. Tucker will do his best to ensure all the work is done before the Labor Day Weekend crowd arrives. Chair Maxwell said if this cannot be done in time, a temporary fix should be installed.
- d. **Northfield Beautification Efforts.** Chair Maxwell would like to thank the community members who have stepped forward to help beautify Northfield by putting flowers on our covered bridges and by the "Welcome to Northfield" signs. He provided special thanks to the group known as Northfield Gardeners who spend many, many hours each summer installing and maintaining the flower beds on and around the Common. He singled out members Sally Davidson and Christine Barnes for their dedicated service to the community.
- e. **Interim Recreation Committee.** Chair Maxwell asked if Manager Schulz has completed the community outreach to regular users of our municipal parks to determine if they would like to serve on this interim committee. Manager Schulz said he contacted numerous persons about this but has only received one response to date. He will make additional efforts on this.

**XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**XII. Motion by Board member Morse, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to adjourn. Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of August 24, 2021.